

# Phonology of Masoretic Hebrew

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Jiří Hedánek

Any work dealing with *phonology of Masoretic Hebrew* must, first of all, cope with the condition of how the sound of its text is interpreted, i.e. largely its phonology. It is not difficult to accept the fact that much of it is not, or not clearly, known concerning an ancient or early Middle Ages record. No real phonetics can be spoken about unless authentic speech of native speakers is available. Phonology on the other hand which is a mental system showing in language behaviour can be processed in a similar manner as other language subsystems that, in spite of being mental, show in linguistic behaviour. What is disappointing is insufficient or lacking discernment between the phonetics and the phonology of the language. It applies whether a student remains with a part one of a textbook or grammar of Biblical Hebrew, or turns to a specialized work. Even if textbooks or grammars deal with the topic in detail, they still suppose the graphic signs in the two combined systems (distant one to one-and-a-half millenium from each other) can be linked each to a single phoneme of the language. This assumption seems to be kept also in specialized publications. They do work out the sound into a system but simultaneously they encrypt it into a shape virtually inaccessible to a common student of theology. A question appears if and how much this is a condition one cannot help but accept.